

Message from the Chief

Chief's Memo – April 30, 2007

CAL FIRE vision and priorities looking forward over the next four years of the Governor's administration



2006 was a year of transition for the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). Internally, the department was confronting budget deficits, salary inversion and compaction issues, aging infrastructure and equipment, and the need to fill key leadership positions. Externally, the department was facing sensitive issues with a variety of stakeholders (e.g. local government, industry and environmental interests) regarding the rising cost of delivering fire protection services, the future placement of fire protection assets (e.g. Hemet-Ryan Air Attack Base), the handling of our forest practice regulatory responsibilities and the future management of the state demonstration forest system (e.g. Jackson State Demonstration Forest).

Solutions are well underway for each of these issues. See the CAL FIRE 2-Year Work Plan for a more detailed view of every CAL FIRE Program.

Key Opportunities and Challenges Ahead

The next four years of the Governor's administration will provide CAL FIRE with a number of key opportunities and challenges. The primary responsibilities of the department remain the protection of life, property, and the environment within State Responsibility Areas (SRA), within contracted local government areas, in response to mutual aid requests, and responding to mission tasking from the Governor's Office of Emergency Services. These responsibilities are carried out through CAL FIRE's Fire Protection, Office of the State Fire Marshal, and Resource Management programs with support from other administrative programs (Management Services, Legal, Legislative, and Communications).

The following are some of the key objectives for the department over the next four years:

STRENGTHEN AND INTEGRATE DEPARTMENT MISSION AND PROGRAMS

The department will complete a reorganization that better integrates Fire Protection, Resource Management, and State Fire Marshal responsibilities. The department will clarify the mission of the organization by reviewing legislative mandates, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection policies, historical mission

tasking by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, Governor's Executive Orders, and other legal findings.

The department will continue to focus on the maintenance and replacement of the infrastructure and equipment to meet our public safety mission and to coordinate with other state agencies on interoperability.

The department will also focus on the fiscal responsibility of all programs and utilization of the E-Fund. The department will work closely with the Department of Finance to identify deficiencies in a timely manner, as well as develop options to minimize those impacts on the General Fund.

FIRE PROTECTION

Succession

The department will continue to prepare the next generation of leaders to handle the broad mission of the department. We will recruit, train, and retain our talented workforce. We will finalize and implement a succession plan and an employee development program that ensures that personnel selected for any position are qualified by training and experience.

We are in the process of reviewing and updating CAL FIRE job classifications with initial focus on Assistant Chief, Dispatcher Clerks, Forester and Fire Fighter I series. We plan to improve the entry-level hiring process and include background check procedures and CPAT testing.

Fire Suppression

We will actively and aggressively control structure fires and wildfires to safeguard lives, property, and the environment, while protecting watersheds and reducing carbon dioxide emissions.

Aviation

We will evaluate and maintain aviation capabilities to ensure that CAL FIRE fixed-wing and helicopter fleet is able to meet all necessary response mission needs. We will pursue partnership opportunities and funding to maintain access to "Supertanker" aircraft.

Troop Strength

We will strengthen staffing levels to meet a minimum goal of 3-person staffing for state engines, and staffing of Schedule A and Amador Plan Contracts at 3-persons, where possible, but not less than 2-person at a minimum. Where and when appropriate, we will increase staffing levels to 4-person staffing.

Cooperative Agreements

The department will continue to pursue cooperative agreements with local government when it is financially and operationally in the interest of the state, as well as the local government entity.

Training

We look to increasing training standards to meet or exceed highest professional standards (CICCS or equivalent) and improve employee certification and qualification requirements.

Liability

We will provide leadership to develop federal legislation to provide equitable firefighter liability standards for joint Federal/State/Local firefighting efforts for USFS fires (Esperanza Fire administrative investigation).

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Strengthen Fire Prevention and Planning

A key planning element of CAL FIRE's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Fire Prevention is the development and rollout of Fire Hazard Severity Zone Maps initially for State Responsibility Areas (SRA) and Local Responsibility Areas (LRA) next year. This will include working with local government to implement newly adopted Building Standards with the fire hazard severity zone maps.

We must develop GIS-based firesafe planning tools for all levels of government that encourage better land use planning and community design features to reduce wildfire losses.

We will be conducting training for California Building Officials on the Wildland Urban Interface Building Standards set to go into effect in January 2008.

We will Increase defensible space inspections, enforcement, and monitoring of overall compliance.

State Fire Training Standards

OSFM will work with our partners to build consensus on the recently completed State Fire Training Master Plan to improve/standardize fire training for state and local agencies.

Arson Prevention and Fireworks Enforcement

We will improve and expand arson prevention measures with federal, state and local enforcement agencies. We will create penalty-based funding mechanisms for fireworks enforcement to reduce the use of dangerous fireworks.

“Green Construction” - Fire & Life Safety

The department will work with the Governors Office, public agencies and private businesses to promote “Green Construction” and ensure that this promotion does not reduce the fire and life safety values in residential, commercial or industrial construction.

Fiscal Responsibility and Cost Recovery

We will continue to evaluate opportunities for state revenues in the SRA where developments, conversions, and local land use decisions are impacting the cost of fire protection for the state. We will pursue cost recovery for the department and take enforcement actions where appropriate for large fires where responsible parties can be identified.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

As the Governor has correctly noted, the effects of climate change represent the greatest environmental challenges we face today. CAL FIRE’s fire protection, fire prevention and resource management mission directly contribute to meeting the Governor’s green house gas reduction goals now and in the future. Similarly, the consequences of climate change are influencing the severity, length and diversity of incidents that CAL FIRE must be prepared to successfully respond to in order to protect both the people and the economic and environmental assets of California.

Climate Change

CAL FIRE is pursuing a comprehensive action plan to meet the Governor’s Climate Action Goals:

Increase Tree Planting Statewide to Capture Carbon Dioxide

We plan to maximize the use of bond funds (Propositions 12, 50 and 84) to expand and increase urban and rural tree planting. We will also partner with local government, non-profit, and private sector entities to accomplish our objective of supporting efforts that result in an additional five million trees in urban areas by 2020.

Conserve Forest Landscapes to Optimize Carbon Storage

We will work with local government to support improved land use planning to conserve forested lands (e.g. Timber Production Zones) and minimize the impact of conversion to other uses.

We will work to reauthorize and expand the Forest Legacy Program that leverages federal dollars to conserve private working forest land.

We will continue to work closely with local government to obtain maximum consideration of wildfire safety adaptation and mitigation during revision of the Fire Safety element of individual county General Plans.

Grow Trees Faster to Store More Carbon

The department will enhance the research and demonstration capabilities of the entire state demonstration forest system to become known for conducting “World Class” inter-disciplinary research. We will support ongoing research in cooperation with the United States Forest Service and University of California (e.g. Sierra Nevada Adaptive Management). We are near completion of a new management plan for Jackson Demonstration State Forest and we will update other state forest plans in accordance with Board of Forestry policy and with stakeholder support.

We will expand programs to thin forest stands to improve forest health and reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfires.

Fuel Hazard Reduction

We will expand and coordinate programs to increase the amount of forest, range, oak, and brush land acres treated to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire. As part of this, an increased effort will be made to seek and develop markets (energy, fuels, solid wood, chemical) for the small wood and biomass residue coming from the projects.

We will coordinate with local government to increase implementation of fuel hazard reduction projects on areas of Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) not within State Responsibility Areas to reduce the risk of large damaging wildfires and to reduce Green house Gas emissions.

Promote the Use of Wood from Urban and Native Forests to Conserve and Diversify Our Energy Supply

CAL FIRE will work closely with the Energy Commission and Public Utilities Commission to more than double the amount of energy (including electricity and ethanol) produced from woody forest residue (biomass).

The Department is working toward the development of two small (1-Megawatt) wood-to-electricity plants to show how renewable forest residue generates energy. This effort is intended to encourage rural communities near forests to examine their opportunities for producing their own energy.

We will support efforts by the United States Forest Service to develop long term stewardship contracts to support forest health treatments and facilitate woody biomass utilization.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Grijalva', written over the printed name.

Ruben Grijalva, Chief
Director

Total Force Committee

I have convened the new *Total Force Committee (TFC)* to help formulate ideas, suggestions and solutions for E-Team consideration pertaining to some of the personnel issues that were raised at last October's Statewide Manager's Meeting in Sacramento. I appointed Asst. Deputy Director Duane Shintaku and Asst. Region Chief Del Walters as co-chairs of the committee. A New Outlook Folder has been set up to receive comments and suggestions from the field. The new folder is located under "All Public Folders", "Statewide General Interest", "Total Force Committee Suggestions". Each interested employee is encouraged to email their comments, concerns and suggestions to:

totalforcecommitteesuggestions@fire.ca.gov.

Pertinent TFC documents have also been posted on the Intranet for viewing.